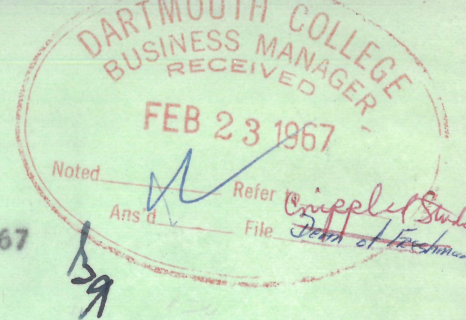


DARTMOUTH COLLEGE  
HANOVER · NEW HAMPSHIRE

February 20, 1967



FROM

Mr. Dickerson

TO

Mr. John Scotford

cc: Messrs. Dickey, Olmsted, Chamberlain, Jackson

President Dickey has shared with me your memorandum of February 14 and suggested that I in turn share with you the experience that we have had with crippled students.

One naturally reacts warmly to a proposal like yours because of the humaneness which lies behind it. Let's talk about it the next time we are together.

In my experience in Admissions and in deaning Freshmen, we have had three paraplegic students at Dartmouth.

The first was a son of an alumnus, who had long had Dartmouth as an aspiration, and who had academic promise, but at the time of admission was diagnosed as having an incurable disease. There is no point in dwelling on the detail. He did not live to finish his Dartmouth undergraduate career. Our sentimental gesture in deciding to admit him to Dartmouth meant a great deal to his parents. As time goes on I am assailed by increasing doubts, with relation to the boy himself, whether the decision was kind or wise.

The second case was [redacted] of Hanover who became a paraplegic in his last year in high school as a result of an automobile accident.

The whole Hanover community poured out its sympathy to [redacted], and especially the hospital and clinic who went all out in providing services, which I take it were mostly free, since their family was without resources. Bobby's high school record would not have supported his admission to Dartmouth but we arranged for him to enroll experimentally in Dartmouth classes to see how it worked out, as a special non-matriculated student. It didn't work out at all. The clinic-hospital people got him admitted to a rehabilitation center down in the South. He wasn't happy there and left soon. As I see this one in hindsight, too many warmhearted compassionate people gave Bobby too much sympathy at that crucial point when the severely handicapped person has to develop that super self-discipline which is needed for a handicapped person to overcome his handicaps.

The third wheelchair case was that of a very bright, possibly brilliant,



student in his final year at St. Paul's School in Concord. He became a paraplegic as the result of an automobile accident. He spent the ensuing months in the hospital here, was tutored by members of the Dartmouth faculty and qualified for his diploma in June at St. Paul's. He matriculated in September and spent, I believe, two years here, with frequent interruptions caused by the sores and infections which some paraplegics suffer because of the lack of circulation below the waist. Many warmhearted people made many efforts to help him overcome his difficulties and handicaps of transportation, logistics and all the rest. But the rigors of the Hanover winters and Dartmouth's layout and physical structure made life very difficult. It was very hard for him to program his courses because he had to take into account the when and where the courses were given, and he was unable to take courses that he wanted to take, or that he should have taken at a given time because he couldn't get from the 9 o'clock class in Filene to a 10 o'clock class on the fourth floor of Dartmouth Hall. And he found it a lonely life and a conspicuous one, being the only paraplegic on the scene. So he transferred to a university in Illinois which I presume is the one that you visited, where they make a specialty of providing arrangements for handicapped students. He left, at least half expecting to return to graduate from Dartmouth; but he finished there with a distinguished record; will probably get his Ph.D. this year and go into teaching.

I wonder whether you are correct in assuming that there are many crippled students who would qualify for admission to Dartmouth. Whatever people may assume about admissions officers, the wells of compassion flow as freely in their breasts as they do in those of other people. The fact that in the 20 years in which I have been very closely in touch with Dartmouth admissions there have been only three severely crippled cases who were serious candidates for admission to Dartmouth makes me question this. During the same period, there have been five students admitted who were blind or almost blind, the latest of whom is a Freshman who got -- and I am convinced earned -- three A's for his first term.

Of course if we became advertised as an institution specializing in facilities for crippled students, we would get many more applications from candidates of this kind. However, as suggested above, I question whether we have the climate or structure to encourage such specialization. I hope and trust that Dartmouth will continue its present concern for serving disadvantaged students. My present hunch is that we can utilize our particular environment, and the resources that we can muster, more effectively in serving other types of disadvantaged students than we could in becoming a specialized institution for the service of crippled students. But let's talk about it.

AID:dsw

*Albert J. Dickerson*